

Letter to Secretary White

SUBTITLE

BODY

The Honorable Thomas E. White

Secretary of the Army

101 Army Pentagon

Washington, DC 20310-0101

Dear Secretary White:

It has come to my attention that the Department of the Army recently launched The Third Wave, a new initiative aimed at increasing outsourcing and privatization efforts. As you begin to implement this plan, I write to inform you of the important, efficient, and competent work performed by the men and women who work at the Tobyhanna Army Depot and to express my serious reservations about pursuing this initiative at this time.

As I understand, The Third Wave calls for key leaders within the Army to develop Implementation Plans “for privatizing, divesting, outsourcing using ‘alternatives to A-76,’ competing using A-76, converting military spaces to civilian or contract, or transferring to other government agencies, all non-core functions that fall” under their purview. It is also my understanding that in preparation for launching this initiative the Army discussed the possibility of its expansion to include the privatization of repair depots. More specifically, the Army Materiel Command was directed to submit, by November 29, an “action plan for exploring with OSD [the Office of the Secretary of Defense] the potential privatization of repair Depots/GOCO conversion.” This portion of The Third Wave, in my view, could have seriously deleterious effects for our Armed Forces during this time of national urgency and negative consequences for the Tobyhanna Army Depot in Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania. I therefore urge the Department of the Army to proceed with extreme caution in these matters.

The Tobyhanna Army Depot is one of the largest employers in Northeastern Pennsylvania, and it is, as a result, an economic engine for our region. The depot is also one of the most efficient military facilities in the country. Furthermore, the

Tobyhanna Army Depot has a proven record of operating at low costs, with high productivity, and with excellent quality, primarily due to the advanced skills and strong work ethic of the dedicated men and women who work there. These hard-working and resourceful civilian employees recently proved their value and effectiveness by winning a five-year, \$61.6 million competition to perform information technology services at the Depot in a Circular A-76 contest. As a result, the Depot will employ approximately 264 individuals to complete these important functions for our Armed Forces.

Because of the previous outstanding performance by Tobyhanna's employees and the job opportunities provided by the facility, I have serious concerns about the Department of the Army's efforts to expand its outsourcing and privatization efforts. As we continue to experience economic uncertainty, fight the war on terrorism, and pursue potential military action against Iraq, we must ensure that nothing disrupts the effectiveness of our Armed Forces. I am additionally particularly concerned about the effects that the added anxiety about job security resulting from increased privatization efforts will have on the existing workers at the base. Moreover, I have strong reservations about whether privatization is the most appropriate long-term strategy for such an important mission as efficiently providing vital goods and services and proficiently maintaining and repairing equipment for our Armed Forces.

Preserving the vitality of our Nation's Depot system continues to attract strong, bipartisan support within Congress. In addition, we have under consideration legislation to promote truthfulness, responsibility, and accountability in government contracting decisions. I am also an original cosponsor and very strong supporter of the House version of this bill, which has attracted the support of 191 Members of Congress. As a result, we continue to monitor very closely all efforts by government agencies to contract out government jobs, including the Department of the Army's efforts under The Third Wave.

In closing, I am proud of the superior performance of the workforce at the Tobyhanna Army Depot and their unique contributions to the defense of our Nation. I additionally request respectfully that the Department of the Army act with extreme caution in undertaking these privatization plans during this time of uncertainty. Moreover, I also request that you keep me informed of the status of the Department of the Army's privatization plans, particularly as they relate to the Tobyhanna Army Depot. Thank you in advance for your consideration of my views concerning this important matter.

Sincerely,

Paul E. Kanjorski

Member of Congress

